

GRAPE VINE

Fall Fair makes profit

Attendance was down, but the 1995 Acton Fall Fair made a profit, despite paying out \$5,000 to conduct a feasibility study on the Acton Arena to see if a takeover was a profitable acquisition.

This past year's event netted \$12,196, up from last year's total that sat just under \$12,000, said Fall Fair Board secretary-treasurer Daniel Varanelli.

The Fair gate was down about \$800 from '94 as 500 less people attended. The main events, including the beer tent (up \$500), snack bar, beef booth, craft tent, stage and teen dance were slightly above '94 totals.

"We're pleased," added past-president Janis Fread. "We used to rely on municipal, provincial and federal grants, but because of cutbacks we managed to run the Fair without them this year. We're very encouraged."

No takeover of arena

The Acton Fall Fair Board will not purchase the existing Acton arena at Prospect Park.

Results from a feasibility study, which began last February, indicate it would cost the Board too much money to bring the old building up to standard and to maintain annually in its present location.

University of Guelph professor Mark Waldron discussed the re-

sults at the Agricultural Society's annual meeting at Knox Church on Saturday.

Talks will now centre on what type of facility the Board could use for events as trade shows during the down time of the Fall Fair.

'Lighten Up' snowballs

A contest to see who can build the biggest red snowball will replace the longest line competition for Lighten Up Canada Day next Tuesday.

Acton organizer Jack Carpenter saw this idea come to life last year in Simcoe, where a vegetable oil is mixed with water to create a red colour. Jack adds each school decided this year to organize their own event.

"This snowball thing is a lot of fun," says an upbeat Jack. "It's inexpensive and Mother Nature supplies the ammunition."

Winter control on target

Despite operating without a council-approved budget, Town Manager of Public Works Ted Drewlo says \$83,650 has been spent plowing, sanding and salting Town roads so far this winter.

He adds that total would compare to last year at this time when the Town was operating under a \$388,000 budget. This season has seen an increase in material costs and budget cuts.

More hours at FoodShare

Acton FoodShare has extended its hours to Saturdays from 10 am to noon, but only for emergencies and people who can't get there on Tuesdays from 9 am to 2 pm.

Board member Pat Hatch says donations will also be taken on Saturdays.



HAPPY RETIREMENT, HON! The Bank of Montreal held an all-day retirement party last Friday for Sherry McNabb, a customer service representative at the branch for 30 years. Extending their best wishes were from left, assistant branch manager Judy MacIntyre, Carol McGowan, Michael Wolfer, community accounts manager, Stephanie Westaway, Frank Houlihan, community banking manager and Edna Perkons, branch manager. (Karen Wetmore photo)

Teachers fight the rulers

It appears that the government and the teachers' unions are headed for a showdown. The losers will be the teachers themselves, and the kids, of course. There will be no winners.

Teachers should, in fact, win the contractual dispute regarding preparation time. I side with the teachers on this issue. I know how much time I need for administrative duties to run our small business. If you don't devote the time to planning and preparing, no business can be successful.

If we want our children to have a stimulating and successful educational experience, why would we think that can happen without adequate preparation time?

At first glance, one would think that 20 days of sick time for 185 (average) teaching days per year is pretty generous. Think about for a minute though, and consider the increased risk of catching one bug or another that teachers face every day. You all know how irritating it is to catch the flu from a co-worker. How would you like to face 30 or more rug-rats hacking and sneezing in an enclosed room?

High school teachers face three or more times as many students with class rotations. It seems logical that a teachers would get sick more often than the usual office or factory type. The pupil per square foot ratio (or pupil per hectohectare, or whatever, for the metrically inclined) is much lower than industry standards allow. Only sweatshops are packed in as tightly. Germs love it.

What has to change is the practice of accumulating sick leave. We just can't afford it. This practice, which is common to many government ministries, has always bothered me. To my mind, sick leave is there to protect an employee who takes ill. If you don't take sick days, you aren't being punished by losing them. You're paid to show up for work.

Those who abuse the concept of sick leave by taking time off when not ill, should, at the least,

The Way I See It

With Mike O'Leary



have diminished promotional opportunities. Flagrant violators should be fired. Teachers make a good buck. At this pay level, shouldn't we concentrate on performance instead of attendance? In today's economic situation, anyone who thinks the dollars available to education will not diminish is fooling themselves. The government is not being specific enough about where they want those cuts to be made. The Tories seem prepared to let the administrative foxes loose to wreak havoc in the classroom hen house.

As a parent and taxpayer, I cannot support any government initiatives that will reduce the effectiveness of the teacher in the classroom. I believe that there are savings to be made in the education system, but teachers should be the last to be cut - not the first.

Teachers have become an easy target these days. Everyone talks about their pay, their summers off, Christmas and Easter vacations and so on. As my friend, who is a high school principal (and bun-tosser extraordinaire) says, "It's a great job, everyone should do it." But is it really?

The teachers I know work long hours. In addition to after-school activities, teachers must mark and record tests, contact parents and in these cover-your-heinie days, keep meticulous records. The pages of recorded marks and notes I see at

parents' night are as detailed as any catalogue I carry.

This takes a lot of time and can't be done in summer. Teachers can't be expected to do all this on their own time. They deserve a life during the school year too.

The problem that teachers have is one of perception. The education system has drawn away from the parents. Report cards, especially at the grade school level, are, for the most part, supercilious drivel. Educators (God, I hate that word), have made the process the priority and what your kid has or has not learned, has been deemed inconsequential. Many, if not most, parents I talk to don't think that they're getting good value for money spent. They take that anger out on the front line troop, the teachers, instead of going after the administrators and edu-bureaucrats at Queen's Park whose hair-brained schemes annually waste millions upon millions.

The teachers' second problem is their own union. The leadership is intransigent to the point of irresponsibility. The question before us is not "Do we continue the status quo in education?" It is, "How do we best serve the children, not the system, with the funds we have available?"

Those not facing that reality need not ask for whom the bell tolls. It tolls for thee. If we're truly concerned with our children's education, let's stop the teacher-bashing. It's counter-productive. The government should be looking to the edu-crats who have brought the system to the state it's in today.

Mike Harris should start his cuts in reverse order. From the top down, not from the bottom up.

HEY!

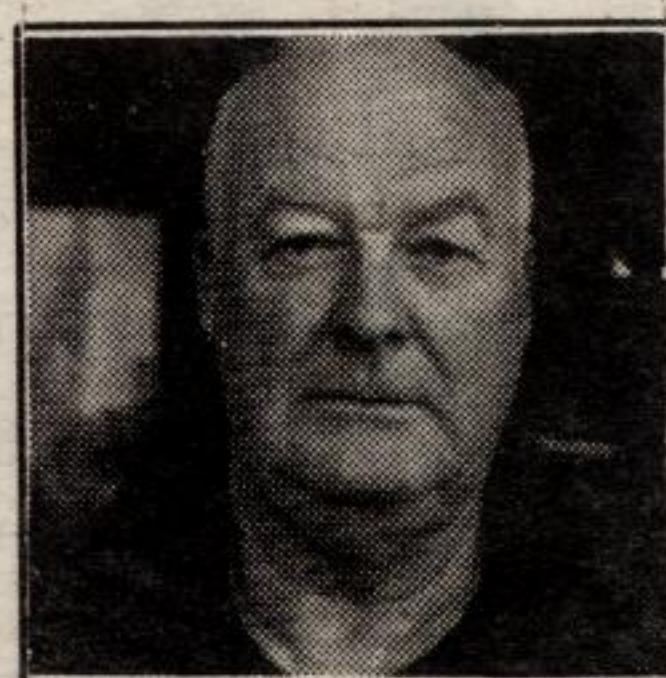
Is it fair to expect Actonites to use Georgetown arenas if our arena is closed?



"It sounds ridiculous when you think about it. I vote to keep the existing arena open until the new one is built. I think if they asked us to use it, we wouldn't get full use."
K. Vrsios, Hwy. 7

"It would be hard for some parents to get their children to Georgetown because of accessibility and other expenses. We'd better hang on to this arena until the new one is built."

Linda Flesch, R.R. 2, Acton



"I don't think it's fair. Some people can't afford to put gas in their car. Some can't afford cars. This is completely wrong. Since regional government came here, Acton has always got the short end of the stick."

Bob Butler, Maria Street

"No. Convenience and travel would be a problem. There wouldn't be enough ice time for all Acton users. Acton never gets anything. You already have to drive out of town to get stuff."

Linda Dunne, R.R. 1, Acton



Same time last year ...

Town councillors approve a \$400,000 expenditure for design and construction of a new Acton arena ... Acton Citizens' Band requests a grant to cover its first-ever property taxes ... Prospect Park and Robert Little school win approval for new playground equipment, costing the Town \$55,000.